FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE WESTERN DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE (WADA)

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This executive summary summarizes the findings from the formative evaluation study of the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance (WADA) Strategic Initiative. The evaluation was managed by representatives from Human Resources Development Canada, with input from the Western Aboriginal staff.

The formative evaluation is the second component in a three-staged evaluation process. The first stage was the development of a detailed evaluation framework, and the final component will be a summative evaluation in the fall of 1998. The intent of the formative evaluation is to collect baseline data to be used in the summative analysis as well as to identify the types of models being used and some of the issues which have arisen to date, in order to make midterm modifications to the program.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Stronger Together Strategic Initiative was developed with full cooperation of First Nations and Metis communities, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance (WADA). The mandate of the program is to create employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people and decrease reliance on social assistance. The program aims to form a partnership between Aboriginal and First Nation people, businesses and the community, thereby opening the door to long-term employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nations people. The financial support which is available to program participants is intended to provide support services such as training, career and family counseling, child care and, in some cases, supplementary wages.

One of the most unique attributes of the strategic initiative is the use of consumer leverage as a form of moral suasion to encourage employers to provide employment opportunities to Aboriginal and First Nation people. In cases where Aboriginal and First Nation people purchase significant goods from a business, the hope is that the employer will consider Aboriginal people for available jobs. If this initiative is successful in the selected Alberta communities, this framework may serve as a guide to other Canadian provinces.

Evaluation Approach

The formative evaluation of the WADA Strategic Initiative utilizes a triangulation approach to collecting the required data. That is, multiple data sources were accessed, more than one evaluator was involved in the study, and the results were analyzed in more than one way (qualitative and quantitative approach). A wide range of data collection approaches were utilized in the study, including interviews with key administrators and project stakeholders and meetings with representatives from the communities included in the evaluation. Other tasks included the collection of baseline data from 35 program participants, interviews with ten employers; development of participant profiles and an attempt to collect comparison group data. A literature review of similar programs and the findings from their evaluations was also completed.

Key Findings

Program Delivery

The four communities included in the formative evaluation had all utilized slightly different models to carry out the Strategic Initiative, depending on their history, culture, local infrastructure and administration. There appeared to be flexibility in the way the program was introduced by WADA to each community, and the local administrators appreciated this flexibility and adapted the Strategic Initiative to the needs of their area. The overriding philosophy of the communities was the need to create long term employment, however each had slightly different approaches to doing this (eg. the development of on-reserve businesses and the belief that wage subsidies are ineffective). In only a very few instances was the consumer leverage model considered appropriate and therefore utilized to generate employment opportunities. Participants and employers were identified in different ways, with some communities seeking out appropriate candidates and employment opportunities, while others relied on the participant themselves to identify jobs and then seek financial assistance. There were substantial differences in the infrastructure of the communities, both in terms of available staff, existing programs and services. The commitment of the program administrator appeared to play a significant role in the success of the Strategic Initiative.

Baseline Questionnaire Findings

Participants in the Strategic Initiative were found to have fewer barriers, with a reasonable level of education and some work experience. While they did encounter barriers to employment, most notably child care issues and lack of transportation, they did not appear to have substantial barriers which would

preclude their participation in the workforce. Lack of skills training, training on the job and work experience were considered to be the primary job skills they needed to obtain employment. An interesting finding was that the majority of respondents considered working with other Aboriginals, working in an Aboriginal firm, working close to home and working in the community were important factors to them. Almost all participants interviewed were currently working an average of 40 hours per week and earning an average of $8.33 per hour. More than three quarters of respondents were working in the processing, manufacturing and utilities industries, or sales and service or trades/transport/equipment areas. Respondents had a healthy perception of life, and felt that in the future it was likely they would be working in a company/ industry they enjoy and applying new skills. They felt less certain that their employment would be a career job; however, the interpretation of a 'career job' was left up to the respondent. Almost none of the respondents felt they would be unemployed in the future.

Employer findings

The majority of the employers interviewed had never accessed government-funded employment programs, mainly because they had never heard of any that were applicable to their business. Employers were keen to access the wage subsidy and felt that they were particularly helpful in the training of new employees. Four out of ten employers had heard of WADA, however three of the four understood it to be a wage subsidy program, and only one mentioned the concept of consumer leverage.

Comparison Group Findings

The WADA Stronger Together Strategic Initiative had a comparison component as part of its overall national framework research design. After careful review of the comparison group approach, and following discussions with HRDC and the participating communities, the research design and tools proposed for the comparison study were not deemed suitable nor acceptable for use with the participants in the WADA Strategic Initiative.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected in the formative evaluation, the following conclusions were drawn from the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance Strategic Initiative.

1. The Strategic Initiative had been successful in generating employment for a significant number of Aboriginal and First Nation people. It appeared that the program will meet its overall goal in terms of the number of participants employed.

2. The consumer leverage model is a new approach for generating Aboriginal and First Nation employment and it was considered a positive element of the initiative in that it is important to introduce various employment models, since all communities are unique and different models fit different communities.

3. Communities who had had no access in the past to government funds were pleased and encouraged to be included in the Strategic Initiative.

4. The consumer leverage model may not be appropriate for some Aboriginal and First Nation communities. The history, culture and infrastructure of these communities may not lend itself well to the direct, and possibly confrontational approach of consumer leverage. In addition, for consumer leverage to have a chance of working, the community needs to have the right characteristics (eg. close to a populated centre, political will to have community members work off reserve).

5. In communities with an existing human resource and economic development infrastructure, the Strategic Initiative appeared to be incorporated into the ongoing planning and delivery process.

6. It did appear that some communities were using the opportunity placement approach in securing employment for their participants.

7. The delivery of the Strategic Initiative, through community-based administration, was a positive feature of the program, and appeared to contribute measurably to the success identified to date.

8. It did not appear that meaningful working partnerships had been developed between Aboriginal and First Nation communities and the corporate and business sectors (one of the program objectives). The communities had a commitment to the generation of jobs, but this commitment had not been conveyed to the employer population.

9. There were some operational issues which were identified, as follows:

   - It appeared that the Strategic Initiative was introduced to some communities with an option of consumer leverage or economic development as a legitimate approach to securing employment for participants.

   - It did not appear that WADA staff screened communities along a set of consistent criteria to ensure their appropriateness to participate in the Strategic Initiative.

   - It did not appear that clear direction was given to the communities on the guidelines and expected outcomes of the program specific to consumer leverage.

- Communities need more frequent interaction and greater assistance from the WADA staff in the administration of the program. A frequent and consistent follow-up mechanism should be developed between WADA and the participating communities.

- There are insufficient staff and time resources in the WADA organization to effectively coordinate and provide support to the four communities involved in the evaluation.

- WADA staff should help communities in their long term human resource planning process to ensure that this is being done and in a manner appropriate for the program.

- Streamline the reporting process by requesting a monthly report on participant activities from each community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Strategic Initiative should continue to focus on the creation of long-term employment and the development of long-term human resource plans (additional funds or training may be needed to further train administrators).

- More emphasis should be placed on the development of working relationships between employers and the communities. Joint relationships should be investigated between complementary communities,

- The Strategic Initiative may require a greater level of flexibility to work in the Aboriginal and First Nation environment. Communities consistently indicated that they wanted to be able to use the funds allocated in whatever way they considered to be most effective (eg. wage subsidy, equipment).

- The Strategic Initiative, utilizing the consumer leverage approach, should be used only in communities where there is a likelihood of success as follows:

    - a community administrator who is comfortable and believes in the consumer leverage strategy

    - an employer community in the surrounding area and adequate transportation

    - there is political support (eg. Chief and Council) to have people work off reserve

- WADA needs to reconsider their administrative resources to ensure that they have enough staff to deal effectively with the participating communities.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The report makes several recommendations which require consideration by the program manager. Key among these are:

- the need for supports of different kinds for the participating communities e.g. reporting/administration, expectations regarding outcomes, more frequent interaction, knowledge and skills transfers to community administrators who conduct joint human resource planning;
- consistent screening criteria for those that are to participate in the initiative;
- establishing WADA's role in the employer targeting process (identifying which employers may benefit most from Aboriginal spending), and the provision of human resource planning and other supports to the communities participating in the initiative;
- participant feedback about unmet needs in the areas of transportation, child care, and ongoing skill development;
- a broader application of the consumer leverage model.

RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are proposed as a set of mid-term corrections in the WADA ASI project.

First, is the enhancement of project staff skills and knowledge in the area of human resource planning. WADA is currently developing a plan that will see the project staff fully competent in this area by the end of February/98. Additional funds will be made available to the project to defray these costs. In addition, WADA is planning the use of a workshop (perhaps more than one depending on need) to transfer HRP skills/knowledge to community administrators.

Second, WADA staff are in the process of developing literature and fact sheets that can be provided to participating communities. The fact sheets, which will be available by the end of December, will cover a range of topics including expectations, reporting, administrative procedure, approval of expenditure categories, etc.

Third, the criteria outlined in the report were in fact those used to select the communities. Any additional selections (to replace those that are "dormant" by virtue of low activity), will also include the need to demonstrate commitment to organizing resources around the individuals (program participants to get appropriate access to community transportation, child care, and ongoing skills

development), as well as have one point of administrative contact for employers participating in joint human resource planning within the project.

Fourth, the addition of a second cohort of participants through additional funding from HRDC and INAC will allow for the implementation of the mid-term corrections noted above. In addition, the inclusion of a modest initiative in urban Edmonton may test the feasibility of such an approach in a larger centre where a significant number of head offices are located.

As has been noted, the initiative is producing long term employment, and the community-based model is working effectively given the commitment required at the political level. The summative will provide a picture of the program impacts in terms of the first and second participant cohorts.

1.0 Introduction

The Stronger Together Strategic Initiative was developed with full cooperation of First Nations and Metis communities, the federal government Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) and Western Aboriginal Development Alliance (WADA). The mandate of the program is to create employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people and decrease reliance on social assistance. The aim of the program is to form a partnership between Aboriginal and First Nation people, businesses and the community, thereby opening the door to long term employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people. The financial support which is available to program participants is to provide support services such as training, career and family counseling, child care and, in some cases, supplementary wages. One of the most unique attributes of the strategic initiative is the use of consumer leverage as a form of moral suasion to encourage employers to provide employment opportunities to Aboriginal and First Nation people.

This formative evaluation is the second component in a three staged evaluation process. The first stage was the development of a detailed evaluation framework, and the final component will be a summative evaluation in the fall of 1998. The intent of the formative evaluation is to collect baseline data to be used in the summative analysis as well as to identify the types of models being used and some of the issues which have arisen to date, in order to make midterm modifications to the program.

2.0 The Strategic Initiative

The Stronger Together Strategic Initiative has been developed as a new approach to increase labor market success by Aboriginal and First Nation people. The Strategic Initiative was developed with full co-operation of First Nations and Metis communities, the federal government (HRDC) and Western Aboriginal Development Alliance (WADA). The mandate of the program is to create employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people and decrease reliance on social assistance. The program aims to form a partnership between Aboriginal and First Nation people, businesses and the community, thereby opening the door to long term employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people. The financial support which is available to program participants is to provide support services such as training, career and family counseling, child care and, in some cases, supplementary wages.

One of the most unique attributes of the Strategic Initiative is the use of consumer leverage as a form of moral suasion to encourage employers to provide employment opportunities to Aboriginal and First Nation people. The potential benefits of such a model are unknown, but may be substantial in terms of creating employment opportunities. The WADA states that, "since Aboriginal and First Nation people are major consumers of goods and services but are not equal beneficiaries of the economic and employment opportunities generated by their consumption, positive changes in employers attitudes about Aboriginal and First Nation employment can be achieved." In cases where Aboriginal and First Nation people purchase significant goods from a business, the hope is that the employer will consider these individuals for available jobs. If this initiative is successful in the selected Alberta communities, this framework may serve as a guide to other Canadian provinces.

2.1 Expected Outcomes of the Strategic Initiative

2.1.1 Overall

The purpose of the Stronger Together Initiative, as set out in the initial documentation, is to encourage long-term employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people and thereby minimize the reliance on government transfer payments, primarily social assistance, to increase self-esteem of participants through the securing of employment, and to help improve the attitude of employers towards Aboriginal and First Nation people.

The goal of this program comes, in part, from the overall goals of the WADA which are as follows:

- To facilitate, support and co-ordinate Aboriginal and First Nation participation in the mainstream economy of Canada through the purchase of and/or creation of Aboriginal and First Nation controlled business;
- To develop and expand business networks between Aboriginal and First Nation interests and municipal, provincial, national and international business communities;
- To become a focal point of common interest for Aboriginal and First Nation people, business and organizations interested in working, investing and benefiting from working together, and;
- To research and identify opportunities for joint venture partnerships between the Aboriginal and First Nation community and business who currently provide products or services to these communities, organizations or individuals.

The major objective of the initiative is to develop a consumer leverage model that encourages the creation of employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people, by demonstrating the mutual benefits to business and Aboriginal and First Nation people, resulting from a cooperation of the two groups.

More specifically, the objectives of the Stronger Together Initiative are:

- Anticipated number of participants of 120 in the hope of creating 90 full-time permanent jobs over three years.
- The development of meaningful working partnerships between the Aboriginal and First Nation community and the corporate and business sectors that are capable of providing sustained employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people.
- The use of existing First Nations' agencies and services, and the development of other First Nation services to ensure that Aboriginal and First Nation people are fully trained to share in the available employment opportunities.
- To develop and test consumer leverage models.
- The development of a methodology, through the pilot project, that can be used by other Aboriginal and First Nation communities in Alberta and across Canada to create working relationships and partnerships with the corporate and business sectors to produce sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people.
- The developed model should be self-funding and self-sustaining.

2.1.2 Additional Expected Outcomes

Through discussions with key stakeholders of the program, additional or clarified expected outcomes were identified as follows:

2.1.2.1 Human Resource Development Staff

A number of outcomes were identified in discussion with HRDC staff:

1. The primary purpose of the initiative is to test the consumer leverage model.
2. Targeting employers and doing joint long term human resource planning was key to the long term success of the initiative. The desired outcome is a written agreement or letter of understanding between the community and the employer that they will participate in human resource planning for the long term.
3. Employment is also an outcome, as is anything to do with a long term commitment in the human resource development context. It is not necessary that long term permanent jobs are created - the employment cycle (temporary, part time, etc.) is still a legitimate outcome.
4. To foster ownership from the community and the employer population in the generation of jobs.

2.1.2.2 WADA Staff

In discussions with WADA staff, the following expected outcomes were identified:

1. Permanent jobs created for Aboriginal and First Nation people.
2. Relationships built between WADA and the communities.
3. WADA feels that long term employment is more important than consumer leverage. The feeling is that the consumer leverage model is too narrowly defined and should be expanded to let communities become the sellers of products (e.g. the garment factory supplies to off-reserve, but is actually on-reserve).

3.0 Research Design

The formative evaluation of the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance (WADA) Strategic Initiative utilizes a triangulation approach to collecting the required data. That is, multiple data sources were accessed, more than one evaluator was involved in the study, and the results were analyzed in more than one way (qualitative and quantitative approach).

The data sources which were accessed or collected during the course of the study were as follows:

3.1 Primary Data Sources

3.1.1 Meeting With HRDC Staff

A meeting was held with program staff from HRDC to review the expectations of the formative evaluation and to obtain additional insight on the program, its delivery and anticipated outcomes arising from the initiative. The use of consumer leverage was discussed and the necessity of using this model in the Strategic Initiative was reinforced. A copy of the HRDC staff questionnaire is in Appendix A of the Technical Report.

3.1.2 Meeting With WADA staff

A meeting was held with WADA program staff to review the delivery of the program, issues encountered to date and expected outcomes. Additional insight on the communities involved in the evaluation was collected at this time. A copy of the WADA staff questionnaire is in Appendix B of the Technical Report.

3.1.3 Joint Community Meeting

A meeting was held with representatives from the four communities involved in the evaluation to inform them of the evaluation, the steps which would take place to collect the necessary data, and their expected role in the process. Feedback was solicited from the group on their understanding and agreement to conduct the various aspects of data collection. One of the results of this meeting was the decision not to conduct focus groups in some of the communities.

3.1.4 Community Administrator Meetings

A meeting was held with administrative staff in each of the four communities to review various aspects of the program, including program records, methods used to identify participants and employers, and other areas of interest. Preliminary schedules for interviewing were established at this time. Employer contact names were collected at a later date. A copy of the questionnaire used in the community administrator meetings is in Appendix C of the Technical Report.

3.1.5 Program Participant Interviews (Baseline Questionnaire)

In-person interviews were conducted with program participants who were available during the course of the evaluation. A total of 35 interviews were conducted by a trained interviewer who was familiar with the sensitivities of the project. A senior member of the evaluation team arranged and attended the first few interviews in each community to ensure that all parties were comfortable with the process. The following interviews were conducted in each of the four communities:

- Alexander First Nation (Alexander): 6 (out of a possible 11 participants)
- Whitefish Lake First Nation (Goodfish): 16 (out of a possible 28- no participants from the garment factory were interviewed, as it was considered to be inappropriate to take them off the assembly line).
- Kehewin Cree Nation (Kehewin): 6 (out of a possible 10 participants)
- Marlboro: 7 (out of a possible 18 participants)

A copy of the baseline participant questionnaire is found in Appendix D and the detailed findings from the participant survey are found in Appendix E of the Technical Report.

3.1.6 Comparison Group Focus Group

A focus group was held in Alexander to collect information from community members with similar characteristics to program participants. The questions asked in the focus group and the results from the session are provided in Appendix F of the Technical Report.

3.1.7 *Employer Interviews*

Telephone interviews were conducted with ten employers from various communities and in a range of businesses (lumber, convenience store, school, paint store, grocery store, hair stylist, industrial construction). The following is a breakdown of employer interviews by community:

- Alexander: 2
- Goodfish: 1
- Kehewin: 3
- Marlboro: 4

The questions asked in the employer interviews and the findings are provided in Appendix G of the Technical Report.

3.1.8 *Participant Profiles*

Short write-ups were developed on all of the participants surveyed to provide a better understanding of the individual involved in WADA, including some history prior to starting the program, the assistance they received and their current employment status. This information is provided in Appendix H of the Technical Report.

3.2 Secondary Data Sources

3.2.1 *Administrative Data and Operational Files*

Administrative data and files were reviewed during the course of the community administrator meetings. This information was useful in the assessment of reporting practices and procedures.

3.2.2 *Literature Review of Native Employment Programs*

A literature review was conducted of Native Employment programs offered through the provincial and federal governments, to provide depth on the types of programs which had been tried in the past, as well as the findings and recommendations on areas which would be beneficial in the development of new programs. The literature review is provided in Appendix I of the Technical Report.

3.2.3 *Additional Data*

A review was made of the information available to complete a comparison group analysis. Information was collected through Aboriginal Affairs (provincial), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Statistics Canada and through the community.

3.3 Study Limitations

At the outset of this report, there are some study limitations which are worthy of note:

- The findings from this evaluation are based on four of the seventeen communities involved in WADA, and while different types of communities were chosen for study, it is important not to generalize the findings to all participating communities.
- There were roadblocks in the collection of data throughout the course of the study, and these prevented the collection of as much primary data as desired. The study team may have been able to collect additional insights and data if more time had been available to develop a relationship with the community.
- Comprehensive comparison group analyses were difficult to complete, since current detailed data on individual communities were not available. In addition, the lack of secondary data at the community or reserve level prohibited the study team from completing a detailed comparison group analysis. (See Section 5.4.1)
- The entire population of program participants was not available to be interviewed, given that many were working away from the community and were not returning during the study timeframe (and telephone contact was not possible), or the nature of the job (assembly line) discouraged the participants' supervisors from allowing them to be interviewed.

- Summertime presents some constraints in the Aboriginal and First Nation community, given the number of individuals off the community on holidays, as well as attending pow-wows, rodeo circuits and pilgrimages.
- The survey instrument has been modified from the original version to obtain more meaningful data from the Aboriginal and First Nation communities. It is important to keep this in mind when comparisons are made among the different Strategic Initiatives.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

The intent of this literature review is to provide some background on the employment needs of Aboriginal and First Nation people, and the approaches which have been tried to date. Some conclusions are drawn at the end of the section on which approaches appear to have the most success, and some concepts which may be useful to incorporate into the WADA Strategic Initiative.

4.2 Limitations

A number of limitations have been encountered in the preparation of this literature review, as follows:

- The information collected is not entirely current, and much of the program information dates back to the early 1990's. Further investigation is being done to update the information, and a final version will be prepared for the final report.
- There appears to be a lack of outcome information for many of the programs, although some additional evaluations have been requested for inclusion in the final report.

4.3 The Issue

Judging from a variety of socio-economic indicators, the employment and training needs of Aboriginal and First Nation people are considerable when compared to non-Aboriginal and First Nation people. An analysis of 1996 Census data estimated that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and First Nation people is double that of the national average, and in some areas of the county the rate is five to six times higher than that recorded for non-Aboriginal and First Nation people.[1] In addition, the Aboriginal and First Nation population is younger, and while the Canadian population is moving towards retirement age

1 Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC): customized data based on 1986 Census of Canada 1989 prepared by Quantitative Analysis and Socio-demographic Research (QUASR).

in the next two decades, the Aboriginal and First Nation population will experience growth in the number of individuals who reach working age.[2]

Education will also play an important role in the participation of Aboriginal and First Nation people in the Canadian labor market. The current rate of Aboriginal and First Nation illiteracy is over twice the national average and the grade 12 completion rate for Aboriginal and First Nation people is half the rate of non-Aboriginal and First Nation people.[3]

The consequences of high unemployment and low educational attainment are profound. Low income levels (one half to one third of non-aboriginal incomes) combined with other factors (e.g. housing conditions, community infrastructure), create a situation of serious economic inequality. The social costs of high unemployment, dependency on social assistance and low educational attainment are high.[4]

Suicide rates among Aboriginal and First Nation people are three to four times the national average, and a similar trend is evident for rates of incarceration of Aboriginal and First Nation people in provincial and federal penitentiaries.[5] Personal, community and systemic barriers contribute to a lack of self-esteem and the inability to break out of cycles of government assistance and unemployment.

4.4 Strategies

The lack of meaningful activity in the lives of Aboriginal and First Nation people and the barriers to achieving their potential has been typically addressed through individual and community-based resource development. By providing access to training and employment opportunities, it has been felt that Aboriginal and First Nation people and communities will become more responsible and accountable for their lives.[6]

Historically, employment programs were offered in Aboriginal and First Nation communities in a top-down fashion. This approach was not considered to be optimal, and in the past five years, the delivery and control of training and employment programs has been placed more in the hands of the Aboriginal and First Nation communities and organizations. This approach to Aboriginal and First Nation labor force development is consistent with other community development initiatives which have been successful in Aboriginal and First

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. Also, Profile of Higher Education in Canada, Department of Secretary of State, 1989.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Employment and Immigration Canada, "Pathways to Success: Aboriginal Employment and Training Strategy, A Background Paper", 1991, p.10.

Nation communities, including Aboriginal-owned enterprises, educational programs, and training and educational institutions. This increasing development and control of community-based training, employment and educational programs supports the progressive goal of Aboriginal and First Nation self-government and self-determination.

The following section provides a brief overview of the types and scope of services and programs which have been implemented by the Federal and Provincial governments to assist Aboriginal and First Nation people in moving into the workforce. A brief overview of each approach is provided, and in some cases a discussion of the limitations of these programs in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and First Nation people.

4.4.1 Federal Government Programs

- The Canadian Jobs Strategy
- Training and Employment Services
- Training Allowances
- Employment Insurance Developmental Uses
- Social Assistance Recipient Training
- Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy
- Native Internship Program (NIP)
- Federal / Provincial Agreements on Training
- Indian Community Human Resource Strategy
- Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI)
- Aboriginal Business Development Program
- Canada / Yukon Economic Development Agreement
- Financial Transfer Agreements
- Pre-Vocational Training Initiatives

4.4.2 Provincial Government Aboriginal Programs

- Employment Counseling and Placement Services
- Indian Management Assistance Program
- The RCMP Native Students Program
- Aboriginal Oil and Gas Operations Program

4.5 Conclusions

The significant resources which have been devoted to Aboriginal and First Nation employment and training have not necessarily met the human resource development plans and labor market objectives of Aboriginal and First Nation people.[7] The following outlines some of the findings from the various Aboriginal initiatives which have been tried, and links these findings to the WADA Strategic Initiative.

1. Delivery of Aboriginal and First Nation employment programs should, where appropriate, be through Aboriginal and First Nation community-based structures, organizations and related groups. An overall consultation process must be developed for Aboriginal and First Nation people to have input into program design. The use of a consultative process could provide significant input into how Aboriginal and First Nation employment problems could be resolved effectively within the framework of Aboriginal and First Nation communities.

   The WADA Strategic Initiative does utilize a community-based approach to service delivery, however input from the communities on the design and limitations of the program would have been useful. For example, in isolated communities such as Goodfish it was not likely that the consumer leverage model, in its pure sense, would be appropriate.

2. There is a need for greater emphasis on human resource planning. Government assistance should provide bands and tribal councils with human resource funds so that they can determine and deliver appropriate training programs for their communities.

   The WADA Strategic Initiative does have a strong human resource planning component; however, this element of the program may not have been explained or encouraged sufficiently to the participating communities.

3. Many Aboriginal and First Nation employment programs operate under a system of procedures, which are often contrary to the culture of Aboriginal and First Nation people. The size, formality and procedures often create barriers to positive interaction between staff members and Aboriginals seeking assistance.

   The WADA Strategic Initiative rely on existing individuals (staff members) in the community to deliver the program, and for the most part formal procedures are considered prohibitive.

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7 Employment and Immigration Canada, "Pathways to Success: Aboriginal Employment and Training Strategy, A Background Paper", 1991, p.11.

4. Job creation is a significant and consistent result of on-reserve Aboriginal and First Nation businesses.

   The WADA Strategic Initiative has been used to fund existing and start-up on-reserve businesses, which, while creating employment opportunities, may not be within the guidelines of the program.

5. Many Aboriginal and First Nation employment programs were considered by the local community to have onerous reporting requirements.

The WADA Strategic Initiative reporting requirements were considered to be onerous by the administrators in the participating communities.

5.0 OVERALL FINDINGS

5.1 Models / Approaches

The four communities included in the formative evaluation have all utilized slightly different models to carry out the Strategic Initiative, depending on their history, culture, local infrastructure and administration. There appeared to be flexibility in the way the program was introduced by WADA to each community, and the local administrators appreciated this flexibility and adapted the Strategic Initiative to the needs of their area. The overriding philosophy of the communities was the need to create long term employment, however each had slightly different approaches to doing this (e.g. the development of on-reserve businesses in Goodfish, the disbelief in the effectiveness of wage subsidy in Marlboro). In only a few instances was the consumer leverage model considered appropriate to generate employment opportunities.

Participants and employers were identified in different ways, with some communities seeking out appropriate candidates and employment opportunities, while others relied on the participant themselves to identify jobs and then seek financial assistance. There were substantial differences in the infrastructure of the community, both in terms of available staff, existing programs and services. The commitment of the program administrator appears to play a significant role in the success of the Strategic Initiative.

5.2 Participant Findings

5.2.1 Demographics

Sex

Overall, 69% of the respondents were male, 31% female.

- A greater proportion of males (83%) were interviewed in Alexander, compared to almost equal numbers of males and females in Marlboro and Kehewin.
- Overall in the four communities, the working age population of individuals in the community is equal between men and women.

Age

The average age of all respondents was 33.4 years.

- The average age in Goodfish was 30.6 years, while it was 43 years in Marlboro.

Marital Status

Overall, 63% of the respondents were married or living common-law, 23% were single (never married) and 11% were separated.

- Alexander and Goodfish had equal or almost equal numbers of single and married respondents, while those in Kehewin and Marlboro were almost all married or separated.

Education

Overall, 31% of respondents had finished high school, 20% had attended some community college, and 11% had attended some trade school.

- Generally, respondents in Goodfish and Marlboro had lower levels of education (greatest percentage had some high school), while respondents in Alexander and Kehewin had generally finished high school and taken some additional training.

Dependents

Overall, one third of respondents (34%) reported having three dependents, with 20% reporting having two, and 17% reported having four dependents.

- There were no substantial differences among communities in the number of dependents, although Alexander and Marlboro were the only two which had respondents with no dependents (overall, 6% of respondents reported no dependents).

Other Members of the Household

When asked about other members of their household, 60% of respondents indicated there was another member who was employed and 11% indicated other members were receiving social assistance.

- Marlboro had the greatest percentage of other household members who were employed (71%), while Goodfish had the lowest percentage (50%).

5.2.2 Employment Related Factors

Current Employment Barriers

Overall, 23% of respondents indicated their primary barrier to employment was a lack of transportation, 17% indicated an inability to arrange child care; 9% indicated other factors such as lack of work experience, training; 6% indicated a health / disability problem and 3% each cited personal problems and "people say I'm too young".

- The communities of Marlboro (31%) and the more remote community of Goodfish (29%) indicated that transportation was the biggest barrier to employment; while Alexander (with one of the highest dependents ratio) indicated child care was the biggest barrier (33%).
- It is interesting to note that none of the respondents indicated discrimination as an employment barrier.

Important Job Factors

Overall, the most important job factors were considered to be working with other Aboriginals (77%), working close to home (74%) and working in the community (71%).

- Respondents in Goodfish (81%) and Kehewin (83%) cited working close to home as more important than those in Marlboro (57%) and Alexander (67%). Only 38% of respondents in Goodfish indicated that working for an Aboriginal and First Nation firm was important to them. All respondents (100%) in Kehewin indicated that working with other Aboriginals was important, whereas this was less important in other communities.

Job Skills Needed

Overall, the primary job skills respondents felt they needed was a occupational skills training (37%), training on the job (23%) and work experience (20%).

- Respondents in Alexander (67%) and Goodfish (44%) were more likely to cite occupational skills training, while respondents in Kehewin were interested in resume preparation and on the job support (33% each).

5.2.3 Employment History (In Last Two Years)

Employed

Overall, 97% of respondents had been employed in the last two years.

Employed in One Plus Job

Overall, 91% had only been employed in one job.

Hours Per Week Worked

Overall, respondents had worked an average of 45 hours per week, with a maximum of 84 hours, and a minimum of 20 hours.

Hourly Wage

Overall, respondents had earned an average of $8.50 per hour, with a maximum of $25.00 per hour and a minimum of $5.00 per hour.

- Respondents in Marlboro had on average an hourly wage of $11.90, while those in Goodfish earned an average of $7.40.

Type of Work

Overall, 40% of respondents were employed as a labourer, 31% in the trades and 26% in sales / service.

- Respondents in Marlboro were least likely (14%) to be employed as a labourer, and more likely (43%) to be in the trades.

Length of Time at Main Job

Overall, respondents stayed at their main job for an average of 2.85 years.

- Respondents in Marlboro stayed at their main job an average of 7 years, while those in Goodfish (1.5) and Kehewin (1.9) stayed for less than two.
- The average number of 2.85 is greatly affected by the long length of time that Marlboro respondents stayed in their jobs.

Reasons for Leaving Main Job

Overall, reasons for leaving their main job included the end of a contract (26%), shortage of work (23%), and moved (11%).

Employed Full Time

Overall, in the past two years, respondents indicated that they had been employed, on average, 14 months full time; 11 months part time; unemployed 14 months; attending school 11 months; and enrolled in a training course 5 months.

- Respondents in Alexander were employed (full and part time) the highest number of months, as well as the greatest propensity to be attending school.

Received the Following Training

Overall in the last year, 11% of respondents had been in a training project, 9% in job placement, 9% in academic upgrading and 9% in other (e.g. apprenticeship, WHIMS, AIDS Awareness).

Services Currently Receiving

Overall, 11% of respondents had received in the last year, or were currently receiving job-specific training, while 3% were receiving job placement services.

5.2.4 Respondents Currently Working

Current Employment Status

Overall, 94% of respondents were currently working, with the remainder unemployed and looking for work.

Hours Per Week

Overall, respondents were working an average of 40 hours per week.

Hourly Wage

Overall, respondents were earning $8.33 per hour.

- Respondents in Alexander were earning on average $10.00 per hour, $11.43 in Marlboro, $8.87 in Kehewin and $6.41 in Goodfish.
- Respondents in Goodfish reported a drop in their income from $7.40 per hour prior to the program to $6.41 after the program.

Employed Since

Overall, 18% of respondents had been employed since March of 1997, 15% since October of 1996, and 12 % each since January and February of 1997.

- Respondents in Alexander were more likely to be employed a longer period of time (back to April 1996), while those in Marlboro were more likely to recently employed (as recent as June 1997). This may reflect the timing that the program became operational in the community.

Type of Work

Overall, 58% of respondents were working in the processing, manufacturing and utilities industries, with 12% each in sales and service and trades/transport/equipment.

- Almost half (43%) of respondents in Marlboro were working in primary industries, and 17% each in Alexander were working in business/administration and government service.

Problems Encountered

Overall, problems encountered in the current job included other (accommodation, money, weather) 21%, availability of childcare (15%) and transportation problems (15%).

- The main change between the last two years and the current program is a drop in transportation being considered a barrier from 23% to 15%. This may be influenced by the job opportunities becoming available in the community in Goodfish.

Reasons for Not Working

Overall, half of the participants cited an inability to arrange child care as the reason they were not working, and funding cutbacks as the other half (these responses were based on two participants).

Receiving Other Assistance

Overall, only one respondent was receiving Social Assistance and one was receiving employment insurance.

5.2.5 Personal Perceptions of Life

On a scale of 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely), respondents gave the following average ratings:

In the near future

It would be fairly likely (2.7) that they would be placed in a career job.

- Respondents in Kehewin were most confident of being in a career job (4.0), while those in Marlboro were least (1.6). The interpretation of career job was left up to each respondent.

It was likely (3.9) they would be applying existing and new skills.

It was likely (4.0) that they would be in a company / industry that they enjoy.

- Respondents in Marlboro felt confident (5.0) that they would be in a company that they enjoy.

It was very likely (4.7) that they would be employed.

It was not likely (1.4) that they would be unemployed.

- Respondents in Goodfish were most confident of their jobs and felt it was not likely (1.0) that they would be unemployed, compared to a rating of 2.3 in Alexander.

In the longer term

It was very likely (4.7) they would maintain steady employment.

It was likely (3.0) they would be in a career-track position.

- Respondents in Kehewin were most confident they would be in a career-track position (4.0), compared to those in Marlboro (1.7).

It was likely (3.8) they would be with the same company.

- Respondents in Goodfish were most confident they would be with the same company (4.13) compared to 4.0 in Marlboro, 3.7 in Kehewin and 2.8 in Alexander.

It was not likely (1.2) they would be on social assistance.

It was not likely (1.0) they would be unemployed.

5.2.6 General Statements About Work

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), respondents gave the following average ratings:

They strongly agree (7) that they want to be working in the near future.

They strongly agree (6.8) that it is important to have work which makes good use of their skills.

They disagree (2.1) that there are no good jobs out there for them.

- Respondents in Marlboro were most confident that there were good jobs (1.4) compared to those in Alexander (2.7).

They strongly agree (6.8) that they want to be working in an interesting field.

They agree (5.6) that they want to be in a career track position.

They strongly agree (6.9) that being respected in their work is important to them.

They strongly agree (6.7) that they are ready for a full-time position.

- Respondents in Marlboro were least ready for a full-time position (5.3) compared to the other communities which all gave a rating of 7.0.

5.2.7 Summary

Based on the findings, Marlboro has the lowest level of education, the highest income in the last two years as well as now, the highest confidence for being in a job that they enjoy. Kehewin has the a high level of education, an average level of income, less than two years of average job retention, and a reasonable belief that they will be in a job that they could enjoy in the future. Alexander has a high education level, average level of income, less than two year job retention and high belief that they will be in a job that they could enjoy in the future. Goodfish has a low education, low income (reduction in the current position), job retention less than two year, and a reasonable belief that they will be in a job that they enjoy in the future.

5.3 Employer Findings

The majority of the employers interviewed had never accessed government-funded employment programs, mainly because they had never heard of any that were applicable to their business. Employers were keen to access wage subsidy and felt that they were particularly helpful in the training of new employees. Four out of ten employers had heard of WADA, however three of these understood it to be a wage subsidy program, and only one mentioned the concept of consumer leverage.

All employers interviewed had Aboriginal and First Nation people on staff and planned to hire more Aboriginal and First Nation workers in the future. The majority of employers were situated on the reserve or in the community and were committed to supporting individuals living in the area. Others indicated that as long as the Aboriginal and First Nation person had the qualifications and motivation they were looking for, they would hire them.

When asked if they had any other comments, the following responses were given:

- "We hired individuals from Alexander a couple of years ago through a program where the Reserve topped up the employees salary, but it was a

nightmare. It gave people a false sense of fair market value of the job they were doing. We also had to hire several people just to ensure that two showed up each day. Now we hire by application and it works out much better. I am Metis myself".

- "Government programs are great. If it helps create employment it is very good for morale on the Reserve".
- "Native employees are usually late for work, but otherwise all is well".
- "WADA program is regarded as very important. It has allowed us to employ good people that we may not have otherwise been able to employ to budget restraints".
- "We have definitely come up against some roadblocks. Our agreement hasn't been adhered to. The original concept was to be Economic Development not Consumer Leverage. We are presently appealing the decision to cut funding".
- "Wasn't aware of programs that provided wage subsidy. Would be very helpful in hiring new staff that don't have a clientele built up yet".
- "WADA has helped me to employ more people in the community. I bought a larger piece of equipment so I could bid on bigger contracts".
- "WADA sounds like an interesting program, we would be interested in hearing more".

5.4 Comparison Group Analysis

5.4.1 Use of Comparison Groups

Human service evaluations are conducted not only in order to better understand participant outcomes but more often to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a particular program. Two types of evaluation design are most commonly used to conduct this type of evaluation. It is done either by comparing two different programs with the same outcome goals or by tracking the outcome of two different populations, those that receive the service and those that do not.

The Stronger Together Strategic Initiative has a comparison component as part of its overall national framework research design. It is designed as a quasi-experimental evaluation design using comparison groups, rather than randomly assigned control groups, as the baseline against which to measure net program impacts. The primary tool was the Strategic Initiatives Baseline Survey for Participants.

After careful review the research design and tools proposed for the comparison study were not deemed suitable nor acceptable for use with the participants in

the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance Strategic Initiative. The evaluation team identified this difficulty at the onset of the formative evaluation stage. The rationale for not using a comparison group were many and obvious:

- In many native communities it is considered inappropriate to ask personal questions.
- Native communities often experience severe poverty and unemployment. It may be considered unethical to try to gather data related to employment (lack of) and the effects of no employment.
- In order to gather data, community members must be willing to provide it. Issues related to unemployment are often stigmatized.
- Methodology must support the overall project. The tools used and the approach should be a bridge and link between the communities and the activities of the project, not a hinder.

Based on the above mentioned factors a combination of two methods were proposed, the use of census data combined with focus groups in each community.

5.4.2 Census Data

Three primary sources of data were identified: Statistics Canada census data from 1991, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Census Data 1995, and local data available from the communities involved in the evaluation. One additional source, Alberta Government, Aboriginal Affairs, was identified as a source of information during the project. After analyzing the data available from all of these sources it became evident that very little information is available at the community level outside population profiles.

Statistics Canada had detailed census data from Alexander community, but the completeness of this data is not guaranteed. The other three communities had not participated in the 1991 census data collection.

Local community census data proved to be the most available and reliable. These data were cross-referenced with statistical data, when available, to ensure the validity. The community data were provided by the human resource personnel in three of the four communities, Goodfish, Kehewin, and Alexander. The community of Marlboro is part of the county of Yellowhead, and the data can therefore not easily be disaggregated. Still, estimates were provided by the project coordinator in the community.

5.4.3 Focus Groups

The strength in conducting focus groups is the ability to interview more than one person at a time and for participants to provide their response in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others.

The foundation for successful focus groups are three fold:

- There is a level of trust and understanding between the evaluator and the group members.
- The material to be discussed be accepted for open discussions.
- The interview format must be a culturally accepted way of gathering data.

During the initial meetings in each of the four communities the prospect of holding focus groups with persons of similar profile as those currently involved in the project was presented and discussed. Careful consideration was given to ensure that local control was maintained. The logistics of the groups such as the composition of the groups, flexibility in timing, location, size of the group and the questions to be asked, were all to be developed collaboratively with the community coordinator.

Three of the four communities declined to participate in the focus group sessions since they felt strongly that that particular method of data gathering did not reflect their traditions and local protocol for interaction. Also, the concept of having people discuss some very delicate issues related to employment barriers was a great concern.

Findings From Census Data

Community profiles were established using data available from the above mentioned sources. The three types of data sources, Statistics Canada, Government of Alberta, Aboriginal Affairs and verbal interviews did not always concur. In particular, the census data available from the community of Alexander did not correspond in detail with data from Alberta Government. The main reason for this is believed to be the difference in the year the data were gathered (1991 and 1995).

Chart 1 below provides a brief profile of the four communities that participated in the evaluation.

Chart 1

COMMUNITY PROFILES				
	ALEXANDER FIRST NATION	**GOODFISH (Whitefish Lake First Nation)**	**KEHEWIN CREE NATION**	**MARLBORO**
Size of community (1995)	1,255	1,515	1,359	150
Total # of working age 20 - 59 Male Female	 627 (49%) 303 (24%) 324 (26%)	 721 (48%) 370 (24%) 351(23%)	 585 (43%) 261 (19%) 324 (23%)	 approx 50
Level of Education	< grade 8 12% grade 8-12 50% post sec. 26%	grade 9 (average)	grade 9.7 (average)	n/a
Employment level	44%	30%	25%	n/a
Average income	<10,000 66% <20,000 22%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Proportion of population living on reserve	743 (59%)	713 (47%)	844 (62%)	not a reserve
# of persons placed	12	28	10	18

Source: Statistics Canada Indian & Northern Affairs Canada Community

Community Size

As can be seen in the chart above three of the communities are very similar in size. The fourth community Marlboro is very small, a tenth of the size of the others. About half of the total population is of working age (20 - 59 years of age).

Level of Education

The average level of education is some secondary education grade 9 - 10. Alexander has the highest level with one quarter of their population having post-secondary education.

Level of Employment

Unemployment levels are much higher in all of the communities as compared to provincial levels. In three of the communities the unemployment is around 70 - 75 %. The exception is Alexander where the unemployment level is reported to be around 55% (1991).

5.4.4 Focus Groups Findings

As was discussed above the focus group methods was not an effective way of gathering data in these communities. The findings were predictable and not based on any in-depth discussions. The following are the findings from the focus group session:

Important Elements of Work

The following responses were given as the most important elements of work:

- high pay
- doing a good job
- being treated with respect
- finishing each job well
- having a pleasant working environment

The following were not considered to be important:

- working on reserve (10 / 11 did not feel that it was important)
- working close to the community (no one cited this as important)
- working for an aboriginal firm (8 / 11 did not feel this was important)
- working with other Aboriginal and First Nation people (8 / 11 did not feel this was important)

Jobs in the Community

Most participants felt that the easiest place to find jobs was on the reserve.

Looking for a Job

- All participants were currently looking for a job.

Barriers to Employment

The barriers to employment cited by the participants were as follows:

- lack of experience
- lack of education
- lack of motivation
- lack of transportation
- lack of skills
- a criminal record.

5.5 Impact of WADA Strategic Initiative

Participants were told about the scope and nature of the WADA SI, and were asked whether they felt an initiative of this kind would have an impact on their entry into the workforce. The following responses were given:

- any program which gives skills is good
- job placement is what is needed

All participants indicated an interest in participating in the program.

5.6 Participant Profiles

As was described in the Research Design section (Section 3), the original intent of the study was to conduct 2-3 case studies in order to better understand what the clients experienced as participants in WADA and what the outcomes were. The strengths of a case-study are its ability to allow the same condition(s) or element(s) to be studied from several perspectives. The proposed model was a multi case, embedded strategy of inquiry.

After carefully reviewing each participant that had been interviewed it became apparent that there was no one case that encompassed all the variables under investigation. Also, it became apparent to the evaluation team that the strengths of the project were too diverse and broad in nature to be truly captured and understood through a few case studies. Therefore, it was decided that a brief profile of each participant be prepared and submitted. The participant profiles are provided in Appendix H of the Technical Report.

The profiles describe the following:

- what the participant did prior to WADA
- how and where they learned about WADA
- what assistance they received from WADA
- their current employment status

6.0 Conclusions

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected in the formative evaluation, the following conclusions can be drawn of the Western Aboriginal Development Alliance Strategic Initiative.

6.1 Overall

The following general conclusions can be reached regarding the WADA Strategic Initiative:

1. The Strategic Initiative has been successful in generating employment for a significant number of Aboriginal and First Nation people. It appears that the program will meet its goal in terms of the number of participants employed.
2. This is a new model for Aboriginal and First Nation employment and it is important to introduce various employment models, since all communities are unique and different models fit different communities.
3. It appears that the Strategic Initiative was introduced to some communities with an option of consumer leverage or economic development as a legitimate approach to securing employment for participants.
4. It does not appear that WADA staff screened communities along a set of consistent criteria to ensure their appropriateness to participate in the Strategic Initiative.
5. Communities who had had no access in the past to government funds were pleased and encouraged to be included in the Strategic Initiative.
6. It does not appear that clear direction was given to the communities on the guidelines and expected outcomes of the program specific to consumer leverage.
7. Some communities did not feel they had sufficient assistance from the WADA staff in the administration of the program.
8. It appears there is insufficient staff and time resources in the WADA organization to effectively coordinate and provide support to the four communities involved in the evaluation.
9. The consumer leverage model may not be appropriate for some Aboriginal and First Nation communities.

10. In communities with an existing human resource and economic development infrastructure, the Strategic Initiative appears to be incorporated into the ongoing planning and delivery process.

11. It does appear that some communities are using the opportunity placement approach in securing employment for their participants.

12. The delivery of the Strategic Initiative, through community-based administration, is a positive feature of the program, and appears to contribute measurably to the success identified to date.

6.2 Success in Meeting Program Objectives

The following measures the success of the Strategic Initiative in meeting the program objectives as outlined in Section 2.

1. Anticipated number of participants of 120 in the hope of creating 90 full-time permanent jobs over three years (in all 17 participating communities).

   A total of 67 [8] participants have been funded to date through the four communities, as follows:

   - Goodfish: 28
   - Alexander: 11
   - Marlboro: 18
   - Kehewin: 10

Of this total of 67, the consulting team was able to interview 35 participants, and of these, 33 (94%) were working and 2 (6%) were unemployed. Thus, to date the Strategic Initiative has been successful in securing employment for its participants.

2. The development of meaningful working partnerships between the Aboriginal and First Nation community and the corporate and business sectors that is capable of providing sustained employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people.

   - To date, it does not appear that many additional working partnerships have been developed between the Aboriginal and First Nation communities in the evaluation and the corporate and business sectors. Some of the community administrators cited this

8 The communities may have worked with more participants, but they did not stay in the program.

as a shortcoming of the WADA program, and hoped that with future help from WADA staff, this could be accomplished in the future.

3. The use of existing First Nations' agencies and services, and the development of other First Nation services to ensure that Aboriginal and First Nation people are fully trained to share in the available employment opportunities.

   - The success in meeting this objective was not measured in any meaningful way in this formative evaluation.

4. To develop and test consumer leverage models.

   - The consumer leverage model, in its purest form, was only used in one or two cases, and in these no employment was secured.

5. The development of a methodology, through the pilot project, that can be used by other Aboriginal and First Nation communities in Alberta and across Canada to create working relationships and partnerships with the corporate and business sectors to produce sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people.

   - It is too early to tell whether the methodology developed can be used in other Aboriginal and First Nation communities. It appears that the model intended has not been used sufficiently to date to make conclusions on its viability in creating employment opportunities for Aboriginal and First Nation people.

6. The developed model should be self-funding and self-sustaining.

   - At the formative evaluation stage it is difficult to determine if the model will be self-sustaining, however there are strong indications that many positions will continue after the funding has been concluded.

6.3 Success in Meeting Other Stated Objectives

1. Targeting employers and doing joint long term human resource planning (HRDC).

   - Some preliminary work has been done in one community and is continuing on in another to identify employers and initiate long term human resource planning.

2. Developing a long term commitment in the human resource development context (HRDC).

   - It appears that the communities are committed to moving their community members into the workforce, and in many cases have a strong focus on human resource development.
   - The desired outcome is a written agreement or letter of understanding between the community and the employer that they will participate in human resource planning for the long term, and it does not appear that this has been accomplished.

3. To foster ownership from the community and the employer population in the generation of jobs (HRDC).

   - The communities appear, in general, to have an ownership in the generation of jobs (particularly in areas such as Goodfish); however, this ownership has not been effectively conveyed to the employer population.

4. Long term permanent employment, regardless of the program used to achieve this outcome (eg. not necessarily consumer leverage) (WADA).

   - This goal has been encouraged by WADA, in that more flexibility was given to the communities to secure employment than was laid out in the program guidelines.

6.4 The Strategic Initiative

The models used to implement the program differed among the communities based on local needs. The strength of the Strategic Initiative were:

- The ability to respond to local / participant needs.
- The focus on long term employment.
- The ability to develop local businesses that can respond to external economic demands.
- The development of a program which is available to First Nation and Metis communities.

6.5 The Appropriateness of the Strategic Initiative in Aboriginal and First Nation Communities

It does not appear that consumer leverage is always an appropriate approach to creating long term employment for Aboriginal and First Nation people, for the following reasons:

- The communities are reluctant to use the approach, as they see it as "tokenism" and "pressure tactics." They do not feel that consumer leverage is the appropriate way for an Aboriginal and First Nation community to introduce themselves to the surrounding community.
- In order for consumer leverage to have a chance of working, the community needs to have the right characteristics (e.g. close to a populated centre, political will to have community members work off reserve).
- The history, culture and infrastructure of Aboriginal and First Nation communities may not lend itself well to the direct, and possibly confrontational approach of consumer leverage.
- The communities have, in some cases, modified the consumer leverage model, and have created what they feel is a new definition of the program (eg. that consumer leverage can mean selling products developed on-reserve to off-reserve companies).

6.6 Administration of the Program

Several conclusions can be reached regarding the administration of the program, as follows:

- For the most part, the WADA staff were well received by the communities, but many administrators indicated they would have liked to have had more interaction with them.
- The program was discussed with the communities in a somewhat loose fashion, and the WADA staff did not appear to reinforce the need to use the consumer leverage model in administering the program. There was also no real direction given on how to deal with employers, how to identify jobs, or how to do long term human resource planning.
- The role of the WADA staff does not appear to be consistently defined, and / or implemented and the staff members appear to have performed different functions in different communities.
- The communities did not feel they had sufficient interaction with WADA staff, and in many cases cited they had only seen them a few times, and they were very slow to return messages.
- Communities felt that the reporting requirements for the program were too onerous, especially considering the amount of money received (e.g. some participants only received a few hundred dollars in total).
- The commitment and enthusiasm of the community administrators appears to have played a significant role in the success of the program to date.

6.7 Program Outcomes

- Participant survey results indicate, and communities concur, that there is a certain level of creaming involved in the choice of program participants. Communities are picking participants with a reasonable level of education, low levels of employment barriers, some work experience, motivation to enter the workforce, to ensure success of the program.
- All of the participants interviewed indicated that they had worked in the past two years, and a few had been working directly prior to their involvement in the program.

- A significant number (71%) of survey respondents indicated that working in their community was important to them, and because of the Strategic Initiative, some program participants had returned to their communities to work. In addition, working close to home (74%) and with other Aboriginals (77%) was also important, which does not necessarily meet the criteria of the consumer leverage model.
- The current buoyancy of the economy may be minimizing the need to use consumer leverage in the generation of jobs, and is leading communities to use opportunity placement approach.
- Many communities prefer to put the program funds into their existing employment-generation pot (economic development / human resource development), and use the funds to fulfill their planned goals.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Conclusion of the Two Year Pilot Project

If HRDC and WADA want to assess the Strategic Initiative, in its purest sense, in the final year of the pilot project, participants should be funded only where consumer leverage is used to create the employment opportunity. In addition, long-term planning documents between the community and the employer should be submitted before funding is provided.

7.2 Administration of the Program

Some suggestions on administration of the program are as follows:

- It is critical that WADA screen communities along a set of consistent guidelines to ensure their appropriateness to participate in the Strategic Initiative. In this case, the Strategic Initiative was offered to a large number of communities, when in some cases there was not a good fit with the needs or expectations of the community.
- Unless additional staff are hired, fewer communities should be included in the Strategic Initiative, and more time should be spent with each participating community.
- WADA staff should help communities in their long term human resource planning process to ensure that this is being done and in a manner appropriate for the program.
- Clear direction should be given to each participating community on the expected outcomes of the program, the reporting requirements and the best approach to deal with potential employers.
- WADA staff should provide assistance in the area of employer identification (particularly with larger employers), including an inventory of businesses in the community, and an inventory of skills required.
- WADA should consider its role in providing networking among different communities, and how this may assist communities in undertaking long term human resource planning with employers.

- WADA staff should establish consistent guidelines for communities on follow-up procedures and ongoing support to program participants to encourage the generation of long term employment.
- Communities need more frequent interaction and greater assistance from the WADA staff in the administration of the program. A frequent and consistent follow-up mechanism should be developed between WADA and the participating communities.
- It may be useful to streamline the reporting process by requesting a monthly report on participant activities from each community.
- HRDC staff may want to provide additional assistance to WADA in overseeing the administration of the program, particularly with respect to the approval of which communities are eligible for the program.

7.3 The Future of the Strategic Initiative

- The Strategic Initiative should continue to focus on the creation of long term employment and the development of long-term human resource plans. To accomplish this, additional funds or training may be needed for administrators within the community.
- More emphasis should be placed on the development of working relationships between employers and the communities. Joint relationships should be investigated between complementary communities,
- The Strategic Initiative may require a greater level of flexibility to work in the Aboriginal and First Nation environment. Communities consistently indicated that they wanted to be able to use the funds allocated in whatever way they considered to be most effective (e.g. wage subsidy, equipment).
- The Strategic Initiative, utilizing the consumer leverage approach, should be used only in communities where there is a likelihood of success. The criteria which need to be considered are as follows:
  - a community administrator who is comfortable with and believes in the consumer leverage strategy
  - an employer community in the surrounding area
  - there is political support (e.g. Chief and Council) to have people work off reserve
  - there is some transportation mechanism to get participants to their jobs

- WADA needs to reconsider their administrative resources to ensure that they have enough staff to deal effectively with the participating communities.